

Book reviews

Klaus P. Schneider & Anne Barron (eds.), *Variational pragmatics: A focus on regional varieties in pluricentric languages*. John Benjamins: Amsterdam, 2008, pp. 371.

Variational Pragmatics (VP) is a timely and groundbreaking edited volume of 10 empirical articles that examine regional pragmatic variation across varieties of five pluricentric languages: English, Dutch, German, Spanish, and French. In this volume, the editors, both leading authorities in pragmatic variation, have incorporated a wide variety of topics (e.g., speech acts, forms of address, small talk, response tokens, and cultural standards) and different theoretical frameworks that – as a whole – provide a good overview of the state of this emerging field. The introductory chapter is organized in four sections. First, the editors demonstrate that the topic of regional pragmatic variation is virtually absent in research on (traditional) dialectology and pragmatics, and they establish VP as new field of research. According to the editors, the objective of VP is to determine ‘the impact of such factors as region, social class, gender, age, and ethnicity on communicative language use’ (p. 1). Second, they offer a critical review of two approaches to intralingual pragmatic variation: regional pragmatic variation in Germany in the late 1970s (Schlieben-Lange & Weydt 1978) and in American English in the late 1990s (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2006 [1998]). Third, they propose 14 carefully selected parameters of analysis for future research in VP at both the micro- and macro-levels. And finally, they describe two analytical frameworks for VP: types of language variation (regional, socio-economic, ethnic, gender, and age) and levels of pragmatic analysis (formal, actional, interactional, topic, and organizational). Further, the bibliography at the end of the introductory chapter contains 117 references, and each of the ten chapters provides its own list of selected references.

This volume is divided into three sections. The four articles in section I examine pragmatic variation in four varieties of English. Barron’s contribution is a carefully designed study that examines pragmatic variation in the realization of requests (using data from production questionnaires) between female native speakers of Irish English and English English. The impressive review of the literature covers the intersection of language and culture and a state-of-the-art review of requests in Ireland and England. Results showed that, although the query preparatory strategy was the most frequent employed strategy in both groups, the Irish informants were found to be more indirect and invested more effort in both internal and external downgrading than the English informants.

O’Keeffe and Adolphs adopt Corpus Linguistics (CL) as a methodological tool to analyze pragmatic variation at the discourse level. The theoretical section of this paper describes the scope of CL and offers a critical review of response tokens research. In comparing and contrasting the form and function of listener response tokens in British English and Irish English, the authors found pragmatic variation with regard to a preference for type, frequency, and function of response tokens. Next, Schneider’s paper on small talk is the only study in this volume that examines pragmatic variation across three national varieties of English, English English, Irish English, and American (US) English using a Dialogue Production Task. Results showed that small talk varies across the five levels of pragmatic analysis: 1) formal (e.g., choice of discourse markers); 2) actional (e.g., greetings); 3) interactional (e.g., move combinations); 4) topic (e.g., party or work); and, 5) organization (e.g., moves and turn organization). Finally, Jautz looks at how expressions of gratitude in radio phone-ins and broadcast interviews vary in British and New Zealand English using CL. The results showed regional differences in England and New Zealand with regard to the frequency, form, function, and position of the expression of gratitude across discourse.

Section II examines pragmatic variation in two varieties of contemporary Dutch and in two varieties of German. Of the three articles in this section, Plevoets *et al.* is the only study that used CL to analyze pragmatic variation in the selection of T/V pronouns of address in two varieties of Dutch, one in the Netherlands and one in Belgium. The authors examined six variables that condition the choice of forms of address in each region: register, region, age, sex, educational level, and occupational level. They found, among other things, that in both regions women tend to use familiar forms, whereas men are more inclined to select between familiar and polite forms. In the next paper, Muhr contrasts the cultural standards of public discourse and the realization of the speech acts of requests and apologies in two national varieties of German, Austrian German and German German. The cultural standards compare the Germans’ and Austrians’ perceptions of identity and national pride, the role of the German language in national and individual identity, the relationship between the state and the individual, and the notion of collectivism, social rank, and indirectness (Austrians) and individualism, clarity in communication, and self-definition in achievements (Germans). Regional pragmatic differences were noted at the formal level with regard to the internal modification of requests and apologies elicited through a Discourse Production Task (DCT). Finally, Warga shows how high school students (predominantly females) from one region in Germany (Münster) compare to students from one region in Austria (Graz) in pragmalinguistic forms of requests (also DCT data).

While no regional variation was found between the groups in the use of performatives and query preparatories, some differences were reported in the use of internal and external modification.

Finally, section III examines pragmatic variation across five varieties of two Romance languages: Spanish and French. García contrasts the speech act of issuing an invitation in one informal situation (-Distance, -Power) in two varieties of Spanish, one in Venezuela (Caracas) and one in Argentina (Buenos Aires). The role-play data were sequentially analyzed in three stages: invitation–response, insistence–response, and wrap-up. Although both groups showed a preference for solidarity politeness strategies over deference politeness strategies across the interaction, the Argentinians used impositives to a greater degree. Next, Placencia's study represents one of the few investigations to date that examines pragmatic variation at the subnational level using data from naturally-occurring interactions (service encounters) in two varieties of Ecuadorian Spanish, that of Quito and Manta. The theoretical background offers a critical and comprehensive review of studies on requests in different varieties of Spanish and addresses crucial methodological issues related to the experimental vs. natural methodological debate. The results are analyzed with respect to four domains: the illocutionary and the discourse domains, and the participatory and stylistic domains. Although direct forms and formal pronominal address forms predominated in both groups, the Quiteño data included a higher frequency of internal modification, as well as differences in the discourse and stylistic domains. Finally, Schölmberger analyzes how French speakers from France (Bordeaux) and Canada (Montreal) vary in the use of the strategies selected to perform an apology (DCT data). Although some differences were found in individual situations in each group, the overall results showed no major regional differences in the strategies utilized to perform an apology between the groups.

In general, the methodological debate regarding experimental vs. natural data represents a key component for research on VP. According to previous analyses of research methods (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford 2005; Cohen 1998; Félix-Brasdefer 2007; Kasper 2000), instruments that elicit experimental data (e.g., production questionnaires or role plays) are often chosen because they allow the researcher to control for a number of variables, especially when comparing one aspect of pragmatics in two or more regions (e.g., situation type, gender and age of participants, educational level, and social distance and power). Although production questionnaires and role plays are reliable and represent different degrees of validity (Brown 2001; Cohen 2004), the context of the situation and the social variables (e.g., power, social distance, weight of imposition) are specified for research purposes. With regard to natural data, three

studies in this volume compared and contrasted natural corpora in two regions of the same language (O’Keeffe & Adolphs; Jautz, and Plevoets *et al.*), and Placencia recorded naturally-occurring interactions in service encounters. Thus, the decision to choose experimental data in *intra*lingual (regional pragmatic variation) or *inter*lingual (cross-cultural pragmatics) studies is research-based and is often used to compare or contrast two or more groups (e.g., British vs. Irish) in similar communicative contexts. Further, to increase the level of validity, natural data (e.g., corpus linguistics, ordinary face-to-face conversations, or institutional discourse) should be used to examine various aspects of VP in two or more varieties of pluricentric and less-commonly taught languages. Overall, regardless of the instrument used to collect data under specific circumstances in VP research, it is important to bear in mind that ‘the data collected are to some extent an artifact of the task itself’ (Cohen 2004: 319).

In addition to the directions for future research mentioned in the introductory chapter (pp. 24–25), I will add three more for the future of VP. It has been established that prosodic features in conversational interaction (e.g., pitch, stress, loudness, and duration) convey different pragmatic meanings and contribute to the co-construction of discourse (Couper-Kuhlen & Ford 2004; Szczepek Reed 2006; Wilson & Wharton 2006). Future research in VP should compare the role of prosody during speech act performance across two or more varieties of pluricentric languages. Second, similar to situational variation which conditions speech act performance, individual native speaker variation at the group level should be acknowledged in the presentation of the results, as two groups of informants are not homogeneous and native speaker performance has been shown to vary among the individuals of a given group (Félix-Brasdefer 2008; Hudson 2001). Finally, in addition to the plethora of studies that focus on speech act production, an analysis of pragmatics at the comprehension level in two or more varieties of one language (e.g., perception of refusals or requests or perception of power or social distance) is an area of research in VP that awaits exploration.

Overall, *Variational pragmatics* is a welcome contribution that provides researchers and students of diverse languages with a research agenda and an analytical framework for examining regional pragmatic variation across national and subnational varieties of a language. The combination of experimental and natural data offers researchers various ways of analyzing pragmatic data at different levels of discourse. In particular, the analysis of service encounters and linguistic corpora from a VP perspective will open new doors for the investigation of pragmatic variation that will greatly enrich the field. This edited volume is an ideal reference tool for researchers of pragmatics and general linguistics and

an excellent complement to any pragmatics textbook in the classroom, both for advanced undergraduate and graduate students. This well-written volume on regional pragmatic variation is informative, well organized, and rich in bibliographic references.

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Claus Gnutzmann & Frauke Intemann (eds.), *The globalization of English and the English language classroom*. Tübingen: Narr, Second edition, 2008, 287 pp.

This is the second edition of a volume containing – in the editors' words – 'almost all' the papers given in 2003 at a conference held at the Technische Universität Braunschweig, where the two editors are based. The reason for having a second edition of a volume of proceedings may be justified in this case because the popularity and importance of English as a lingua franca has certainly increased over the last few years. The

drawback of another edition in 2008 is, however, that it is in places outdated. The reader notices this, for instance, when an author refers to a publication in 2003 as ‘recent’. Another point this reviewer would like to make as a preliminary remark relates to volumes of proceedings in general: they are often a rather mixed bag, and this holds for the present volume as well – despite the fact that the authors went to the trouble of writing prefaces for each of its sections.

Having said this, there is no doubt that the present volume gives an interesting and highly relevant synopsis of the impact which the globalisation of the English language has on the English language classroom. It is also a conscientiously edited volume, which has a sizeable introduction and a plausible segmentation into five sections: two general ones (political and sociocultural dimensions, linguistic and sociolinguistic exemplification), and three learning and teaching related ones (teaching and learning English in a global context: ‘old’ and ‘new’ standards, learners in primary, secondary and higher education: focus on Europe, teacher education).

The introduction nicely deviates from a simple listing of the individual chapters, but rather integrates them into a conceptual map of the field. The editors give a general description of what ‘globalisation’ and ‘internationalisation’ have come to mean, they characterise English and the diversity of the language and its speakers, they question the distinction in instructional contexts between English as L1, L2 and FL and give a brief characterisation of English as a lingua franca and its role in Europe, in academia and the classroom. Two points of criticism need to be made: the first one relates to a surprising lacuna in the review of literature presented: the substantial and internationally renowned work by Ulrich Ammon on English in the academy is not mentioned at all. Secondly, one gets the overall impression that the authors refrain from making their own position clear with regard to the issues they describe. So we are left with a constant, slightly boring ‘both–and’, ‘yes–but’ and ‘this way–but of course also that way’, which might be suitable for diplomats but becomes a bit frustrating after a while. Granted that as editors the authors must carefully weigh what they write, but here it seems to me rather excessive.

This is why I found the first chapter in the political and sociocultural section by Janina Brutt-Griffler such refreshing reading: it immediately takes a position and clearly outlines the reasons for this position. In fact, I found this chapter one of the best in the volume. Framing her contribution with a gripping narrative, Brutt-Griffler gives a passionate plea for a linguistic pro-choice option for those sections of the population traditionally discriminated against for reasons of class, gender, ethnicity or region, stressing their potential advancement through a knowledge of

English. Her context is South Africa, a multilingual country with eleven officially recognised languages, where it still is the level of English proficiency which more often than not often has a gate-keeping function. Brutt-Griffler directs her anger against any short-sighted condemnation of learning and using English on the part of language rights proponents. She argues that the support this pseudo-democratic stance is presently getting in many ex-colonial countries amounts to ‘neo-containment’, a selfish attempt by local elites to preserve their prestigious positions. The second chapter in this first section of the book is by Mahendra K. Verma. In describing the situation in multilingual India and the conflicts arising between English and indigenous Indian languages he provides a sort of balance to Brutt-Griffler’s strong statements. His is a more moderate and neutrally descriptive report of India in the 21st century and a realistic assessment of the future role of Indian English. He rightly draws attention to the power of multinationals, and he points out that Indian English is simply a must for survival and that Indian languages – at least for the present – are unable to offer similar economic benefits to its citizens.

The second section is designed to provide examples of the impact of global English on other languages – particularly on the level of the lexicon. It starts with a chapter by Busse on German lexical borrowing from English in the form of so-called ‘Anglicisms’ which get regularly bemoaned in the German conservative press. The author wisely distances himself from any hysterical anti-Anglicism debate, coolly presents facts and figures, but also admonishes educators to develop a critical attitude towards excessive use of Anglicisms in the media. It is a pity that there is no discussion on the more hidden (and thus more pernicious) influence of the English language on other languages at the levels of morpho-syntax and pragmatics, where important research is currently being undertaken in Saarbrücken and Hamburg.

A truly original and interesting contribution is the next chapter by Intemann. She has looked at Aviation English and effectively defuses the myth that it is totally standardised. On the basis of an analysis of cockpit recordings, the author documents substantial variation in the way English as a lingua franca is used in this context, and she also finds a marked difference between native and non-native users of Aviation English.

The third chapter in this section is by Christiane Meierkord – another excellent contribution which presents novel research results. On the basis of analyses of an ELF corpus, she deals with lexical variations that are caused by and in English as lingua franca interactions between different speakers of international English. Her findings suggest that the lexicon is far from stable whenever the interacting groups are themselves unstable. If the communities are stable, a common lexicon can develop, which

tends to be both simplified and culturally neutral. Meierkord recommends that learners be exposed to both variants.

The third section is concerned with pedagogic aspects of the impact of global English on the teaching of foreign languages. The first chapter is by one of the editors, Claus Gnutzmann. He examines the notions 'Standard English' from various perspectives and pleads for a continued adoption of Standard English as the basis for classroom instruction of English, not only in the context of English as a Foreign Language – a viewpoint still largely unchallenged – but also in the context of teaching English as a lingua franca, a more controversial position. Gnutzmann justifies his position by pointing out that any standard is in itself an idealisation that allows for individual and group variation.

The following chapter is by Svenja Adolphs, who reports on a longitudinal study of attitudes of non-native speakers towards English native speaker norms. The results of this interview study conducted at the University of Nottingham are reminiscent of the results of motivational studies by Oller and others in the 80s which suggested that learners' attitudes to both speakers of the target language and the target language itself change as a result of increased contact, knowledge and competence. Adolphs nicely shows how learners' actual contact with real-life native speakers over an extended period of time changes their desire to be or speak like them because they have become more aware and more critical of native linguistic and cultural norms and their limited usefulness in international ELF interactions. Interestingly, subjects often preferred the type of idealised norm mentioned by Gnutzmann to the reality of local varieties used by native speakers.

The next chapter by Allan James picks up the issue of local English varieties used in Europe and elsewhere. The author finds that British and American English still exert a strong influence in Europe although discourse type and proficiency tend to cause considerable heterogeneity and variation of the forms and functions of ELF in use in different constellations of dialects, registers and genres. The distinctions made in this chapter are difficult to follow, and I do not see how the theoretical conclusions link up with the data taken from other studies presented in his chapter.

The next two chapters are by two well-known propagators of ELF: Jennifer Jenkins and Barbara Seidlhofer, who both present their views in a refreshingly clear and decisive fashion. Jenkins attacks the legitimacy of native English norms in the context of communication between expanding circle ELF speakers, a stance this reviewer shares. Jenkins also briefly reviews her seminal earlier work on the so-called (pronunciation-related) Lingua Franca Core and its role in norm relaxation and mutual intelligibility. Seidlhofer embarks on a deconstruction of Quirk's

ideas about the relevance of Standard English for the teaching and learning of English. Given the vastly increased number of non-native speakers now using ELF, she suggests that conservative positions like the ones taken up by Quirk in the past need to be reconceptualised. The future lies in corpus-based work whose results may well point to certain ELF communalities that may turn out to be useful for innovative English language teaching.

The fourth section focuses on pedagogic issues with particular reference to the current situation in European primary, secondary and tertiary education. This section features five chapters – a rather mixed bag. On the basis of interviews with relevant officials, Janet Enever reports on ‘early start’ foreign language policies in Hungary. Although one might argue that this chapter is relevant to issues concerning ELF because ‘early start’ more often than not means ‘start with English’, this paper is of such a level of generality and is also rather ideologised that I cannot see its relevance in this volume. Margie Berns and Kees de Bot describe a comparative study of young persons’ English proficiency in four European countries with varying media-support access and exposure to English: the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany. Not surprisingly they find the better the possibilities of contact with English and the more positive the attitudes to English and ELF are, the better developed subjects’ competence in specific areas of competence will be. The increasing presence of English in the lives of young people, in the media or as a default resource for international cross-cultural interactions, should be taken account of in the teaching of English. The chapter by Elizabeth Erling draws on her personal teaching experience as an English language instructor at a language centre in a German university. The author had administered a questionnaire to her students eliciting their uses of and attitudes towards English. The results show that students cluster around favouring a native British or US norm, or the use of ELF. Percentages listed reveal that the native clusters are the largest (61 percent) with the ELF cluster amounting to a sizeable 34 percent. The author pleads for doing justice to differential objectives in learning English. Students may favour a native English norm, e.g. when they want to become teachers of English or when they want to avoid being detected as a German speaker (very sad that, but understandable given the experiences of generations of German exchange students), or they may favour using English as the language with presently the highest communicative potential.

Ulrike Jessner looks at the learning and teaching of English as a Third Language in multilingual communities such as Catalonia or the Basque Country, and discusses several psycho- and sociolinguistic aspects involved in viewing the acquisition of yet another language – English –

by already bilingual subjects. Jessner emphasises the necessity of adopting a unitary, holistic approach with which to accommodate the complexity of multilingualism both as an individual and a societal phenomenon.

The last chapter in this very diverse section is by Kubanek-German. She sets out to embed the topic of Global English in a more general context of 'global education'. This reviewer does not understand why this chapter is placed last in this section, how this chapter is connected to the others in this section, or even more radically, how this chapter fits with all the others in this volume. Be that as it may, the author endeavours to set up a philosophical framework for the teaching of global English so as to educate global cosmopolitan citizens. She bases her reflections on a rather dated analysis of English textbooks in the 80s where she found that Global English is often framed as a Third World phenomenon. Newer textbook analyses are added that show that there is now a focus on immigrants in Britain. The author concludes with some (rather obvious) proposals for greater learner-centredness.

The last section contains two papers on teacher education. Maiké Grau presents an empirical study on teacher training in Germany. The author focused on first year students who want to become English teachers and their perception of English as a Global Language. Most of these students do not see near-nativeness as a realistic aim in their teaching, opting for international intelligibility instead. But these same subjects also say that they subscribe to the usefulness of a British or American norm for certain morpho-syntactic and phonological features. The author interprets these findings intelligently and sensitively, highlighting the difficulty of transition in the field of English language teaching from norm-orientatedness to the greater freedom ELF affords. The last – and excellent – chapter is by George Braine. He looks at six studies of non-native English teachers and their self-perception in comparison to native teacher perceptions of linguistic proficiency and teaching behaviour. Learners' tolerance of non-native teachers' accents is dynamic, i.e. the longer learners are exposed to non-normative accents, the more tolerant they become. Further, the author found that teachers and students know too little about and are hardly aware of the particular role English plays in the world today. He suggests that teachers and students be familiarised with the undeniable facts that English as an international language is no longer a unitary language owned by inner circle native speakers, that non-native teachers will become ever more important in the future, and that it is time that they realise that English is their language, too.

Taken together, this is a highly informative volume. Despite the critical remarks I made in my discussion of several chapters, and despite my reservations about the diversity of, and the qualitative difference be-

tween, chapters and the topics they address, I would definitely recommend the book to anyone interested in globalisation and the teaching of the English language – one of the major themes in applied linguistics today.

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Guy Ramsay, *Shaping minds: A discourse analysis of Chinese-language community mental health literature*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publications, 2008, viii + 149 pp.

I should start this review with a caveat, namely that I do not speak nor read Chinese and am not familiar with Chinese culture. This may make me an unlikely reviewer for a study of Chinese ‘community psychoeducational literature’, but as a discourse analyst, who also worked on data derived from public health discourse (Locher 2006), I gladly took on this task in order to learn something about Chinese public health texts, and I was not disappointed.

Guy Ramsay’s study is important as he makes accessible data and insights from Chinese health discourse that have been neglected in the literature, which too often focuses only on Western (English) data. He investigates how mental health issues such as depression and schizophrenia are discussed in texts produced by public health organizations in order to inform the community of the nature of the illnesses and conditions and the possibilities for (medical) treatment. This discussion is especially important since, as Ramsay (2008: 3) states, the Chinese population in Australia and the USA use the government mental health services proportionally less than expected (p. 3) and eighty percent of people in mainland China are reported to receive no medical treatment at all (p. 130). Instead, it is the families that take care of the patients, who often consult folk healers for treatment. It is Ramsay’s aim to see to what extent and how Chinese traditional beliefs inform and structure the investigated texts and to discuss to what extent there is a clash with Western derived explanations of mental illness that may hinder optimal health communication. He analyzes five texts from mainland China (PRC corpus), seven texts from Taiwan (TW corpus), and eight texts from Australia written in Chinese (AUS corpus). The texts are of variable length (pamphlets to chapters in monographs) and deal with different conditions.

After introductory remarks in Chapter 1, Ramsay discusses the cultural background of the view of mental illness in China in the past and

in the present in Chapter 2. He concludes that there is a plurality of understanding of mental illness in China, with professionals adhering to Western biomedical explanations, while lay people's views are heterogeneous and often in contrast to Western views. The Western biomedical explanation of mental illness, for example, stresses the hereditary element of the conditions, which is identified as problematic for Chinese people, since it relates to stigmata, endorsed by 'Confucian tenets, such as patrilineal continuity, familial duty and responsibility, and social order and harmony' (p. 36).

In Chapter 3, Ramsay places his study in a framework of Critical Discourse Analysis and briefly discusses some findings of studies of the discourse of health and medicine. He then outlines his wish to explore three voices within his texts: the professional voice of medicine, the institutional voice and the client-centered voice. Especially with respect to the latter, Ramsay briefly reviews work that deals with consumer-empowerment in Western culture.

In Chapter 4, Ramsay introduces his method of analysis, which is 'Rhetorical Structure Theory', already employed in his previous studies (e.g. Ramsey 2000). It is a qualitative analysis of the investigated texts into rhetorical forms, which pan out in different hierarchies. In a second step, these forms are then assigned to the professional, institutional and client-centered voices. Ramsay makes clear that this methodology is qualitative and subjective, but argues convincingly for his categorizations (but see below). Overall, his results show that the PRC and TW data show relatively more client-centered forms ('characterized by the voice of the lifeworld, mediated by narrative and the provision of detail, and rarely [extending] to empowerment and active choice', p. 220) than the AUS corpus, and that all three corpora show institutional and professional voices (the latter being more dominant in the AUS corpus). In Chapter 5, Ramsay deepens this analysis and also takes the topic of the texts (different types of illness) into account. In Chapter 6, Ramsay revisits his findings and elaborates on them.

In my view, Ramsay argues convincingly that, due to cultural differences in the Western biomedical and Chinese understandings of mental illness, community psychoeducational literature cannot simply be translated from one culture to the other (p. 133). He argues that the hereditary nature of some conditions foregrounded in the Western biomedical view is problematic for Chinese people, since a patient's entire family would lose face and be confronted with social stigma if such reasoning were accepted (this is particularly relevant in light of the 'eugenic vision propagated in China during the twentieth century by republican and communist government alike' [p. 36–37]). In addition, he maintains that consumer-empowering forms (as seen in the Australian corpus [p. 114],

but absent in the TW and PRC corpus) are not in line with Chinese expectations based on Confucianism where authoritative voices are expected rather than leaving decisions to the patients. These findings are important and should be taken seriously by health educators. They are, however, mainly derived from the background work in Chapter 2, rather than from the linguistic analysis of the texts, which describe the status quo of community psychoeducational literature without being able to make any claims as to their effectiveness – a point the author is well aware of (p. 130).

Turning to some critical comments on the study, the size and compilation of the three corpora spring to mind. The reader only learns well into the volume how small the corpora are and the number of only a handful of texts each begs the question to what extent the results are meant to be representative. A comment by the author on this aspect would have been called for. The author does mention that the length of the texts played a role when choosing which ones to analyze (pp. 88, 94), but he does not make clear whether the methodology employed cannot deal with longer texts or whether time constraints were at play. Ramsay finds that the composition of texts on depression and schizophrenia differ, but due to the small number of texts dealing with each illness, the same question with respect to representativeness would have to be raised.

The volume is on the slim side with respect to length so it is surprising that Ramsay did not take the opportunity to add a chapter of his own on data derived from Australian English or other Western-oriented practices in order to carry out a cross-cultural comparison of the same text type. It would also have been interesting to see how the English versions of the texts differ from the Chinese versions in the AUS corpus (cf. footnote 3, p. 66). As it is, the cross-cultural comparison is informed from background knowledge derived from previous studies on different texts and the AUS corpus is argued to have been influenced by Western ideology. While this is undoubtedly true, it would have been interesting to see a comparison with non-mediated Western practice, which would also have allowed us to learn to what extent the Chinese AUS texts attempted to accommodate to the target audience. A comment on whether or not the migrant experience can be expected to be really the same as the Taiwanese or mainland experience would also have been called for. In this vein, the author's choice to call Chinese in mainland China, Taiwan and Australia equally cases of Chinese diaspora is also somewhat surprising (cf. footnote 4, p. 4).

In his methodology the author relies on a previously tested approach that seems well-motivated (Rhetorical Structure Theory, Mann & Thompson 1988). He is aware of possible shortcomings, such as the subjective interpretation of the texts, but argues that this point is overcome

due to the consistent application of the same scheme (p. 58). With respect to such consistency, it would have been interesting to learn whether somebody else checked the analysis as well or whether there was a training phase. In addition, one would have appreciated some more explanations on the development of the list of rhetorical relations employed and their groupings into the three voices of professional, institutional, and client-oriented. For example, it is not entirely clear to me why double labeling is not used, nor why such a possibility (or exclusion thereof) is not discussed. The label 'list', for example, could easily be argued to be appropriate for both the professional as well as the institutional voice.

Finally, while Ramsay does not wish to investigate or assign 'intentions' to the authors of the community of psychoeducational texts (p. 132), he nevertheless places his study within the field of public health discourse and argues earlier that the purpose of the investigated texts is to persuade (p. 65). It would therefore have been interesting to see the aspect of 'persuasion' (also implied in the title *Shaping minds*) to appear more prominently in the discussion of the data; a comparison and analysis of the Australian data in English and Chinese might have been an entry point to study whether or not and how accommodation due to cultural expectations takes place in order to achieve effective communication.

These critical comments should not distract from the important insights that Ramsay's volume offers and that are of value both to practising health educators as well as discourse analysts interested in how culture, ideology and discourses intertwine.

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